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ADDRESS BY  
R. B. FULTON

BEFORE THE ALUMNI OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI AT THE UNVEILING OF THE MEMORIAL TO THOSE WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE IN THE GREAT WAR, AND AT THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL OF THE CLASS OF 1869

JUNE 16, 1919



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While the manuscript of the following address was being printed, a sudden illness on May 29, 1919, brought to an abrupt termination the gentle life and noble work of Robert Burwell Fulton.

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JUNE 16, 1919.

*Mr. President, Fellow Members of the Alumni Society,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:*

This occasion might well serve me to open the storehouse of memory and give utterance to reminiscences and recitals of the most intimate and sacred character. Were I to yield too much to the inclination to dwell upon these and upon the memories that come to one who has spent half of his threescore and ten years amid these familiar scenes, in more or less intimate connection with the life and work of this venerable University, I fear I would tax your patience and place too great a strain upon my own emotions. My first endeavor is to pay worthy homage and honor to the memory of those of our brethren to whom this visible memorial is erected.

The Latin poet, Horace, in pride and ecstasy over his own achievements as a writer of verse, uttered the classic exclamation, *Exegi monumentum ære perennius*—"I have reared a monument more enduring than bronze." Acceptance of this rather vainglorious claim of the Roman poet has given rise to a belief that spoken or written words are the most enduring human monuments. Spoken words may, as nothing else can, stir the feelings of those who hear,

and they can excite to instant action. But the most impressive memorials of great and noble character and achievement are those visible expressions wrought in durable stone or metal which continually, as the years go by, make their unceasing appeal to the eye of every beholder. The Pyramid of Cheops and the Washington Monument continually proclaim a sublime message that spoken words cannot express, and thus make their appeal to the more *spiritual* side of our nature.

That which we here honor and commend in the lives of those of our brethren who have made the supreme sacrifice in the great war is distinctly *spiritual*, and therefore *eternal*. Nothing great or good in this world is achieved without self-sacrifice, without the obliteration of self in order that the worthy object may be obtained. This is in accordance with the divine law of operation exemplified in the life and the death of the Christ. The life of each one of us began when under the divine ordination our mothers, in order that we might have life, cheerfully went down into the very entrance of the Valley of the Shadow. We admire with all our hearts the bravery and sublime courage of all the men who in response to their country's selection and call went to war against the forces attacking the very fundamentals of civilization. But let us remember that mere bravery in the face of danger is not the thing we most honor in these men.

The leader of the Greeks at the siege of Troy, in the early dawn of history, was Agamemnon, and a worthy warrior leader was he. Of him another Greek warrior, Achilles, well said in a quarrel, "There were brave men *before* Agamemnon." With the light of history we can truthfully say that there have been brave men in every generation since the time of Agamemnon; but where in all the pages of history is it recorded that men went to battle with such sublime and devoted self-sacrificing courage or with such high purpose for mankind as did the men we here honor? Against this

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spirit not all the trained and scientific savagery of the Hun could prevail.

The Secretary of War, Mr. Baker, speaking at the Victory Dinner of the Associate Alumni of the College of the City of New York, paid a tribute to the college men in the war. He said that the value of the college spirit and education had been shown, that the men knew what they were fighting about, they knew how to fight, they fought fair, and they came back to contribute to the country their studious acquirements, with which they would enrich civilization. He told of his apprehension that the war would break the American academic traditions, and how this proved to be entirely unwarranted. He then described the work at the American Expeditionary Force University at Beaune, where there are eleven complete colleges and nine thousand men; where the doughboy is professor to majors and colonels and where the spirit of democratic idealism is dominant.

It has been said in certain quarters that President Wilson's actions in regard to the war and its conclusion are too "academic" and too "idealistic," which means too *spiritual*, for this practical world. For what, pray, does an institution such as the University of Mississippi exist if not to bless the world with the embodiment of things that are academic and idealistic and spiritual in the highest and best sense?

In the supreme sacrifice which has glorified these youths who sleep their last sleep in Flanders fields, or elsewhere over there, their friends and families have an enduring share. In yielding up their loved ones, these have made sacrifice of the same hallowed and sacred quality as theirs who no longer walk the earth. As long as these walls shall endure, this memorial shall bear witness for all these soldier patriots and their families to the fruitful blessedness of lives lived and given that civilization be not overwhelmed, and that the world be made a better place to live in. This ven-

erable University can teach no more important lesson to the youth that shall frequent these halls than that which comes from the contemplation of this memorial.

The world will ever have, as it has always had, calls for courageous endeavor for the right, and against the wrong,—calls for those ready to make every and even the supreme sacrifice, in places, it may be, less conspicuous but not therefore less important. For us, then, comes from those who have made the supreme sacrifice for duty and the good of the world this clarion call for consecration to duty voiced by Dr. John McCrae, the Canadian surgeon who made his supreme sacrifice while serving the wounded.

“In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

“We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,  
In Flanders fields.

“Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch;—be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, tho poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.”

The University makes no stronger call to the sacredness of duty than the quiet teaching of this memorial with its message from those who lie in Flanders fields.

May this teaching and its influence never fail!

*My friends of the Class of '69:*

Our association is too intimate to find expression in public. The kind thoughtfulness of Chancellor Powers has so



arranged that we are thrown together where we can hold close intercourse and indulge in continual reminiscence over the half century that has rolled by since we were as the boys who now fill these halls. We have forgotten most of the Latin, Greek, mathematics, and science that composed our daily mental pabulum. Since all students forget most of what they learn, what is the use of learning things? My experience and observation lead me to conclude that we grow mentally on a certain *spiritual* element or quality in education, which makes us stronger when it is taken over from our work. Perhaps I will be understood when I say that the essence of education, that which invigorates and makes us mentally grow, lies in the *consciousness of successful effort*. The conscious mastery of a lesson in language in mathematics or science gives the mental stimulus and vigor that means growth. This effect abides with us as long as we continue to make mental effort. Each task consciously well performed better fits us for the following tasks, no matter how soon the facts learned and the knowledge involved are forgotten after they have served their purpose.

I trust that our undergraduate friends will keep these points in mind in passing judgment on us older folk, and if tempted to regard us as old fogies will remember that we have long ago learned and forgotten many of the things which they are now learning.

The sober import to us of this great occasion can not better be expressed than by quoting from the classic poem which Henry W. Longfellow read at the semicentennial celebration of his class at Bowdoin College in 1875. It was entitled *Morituri Salutamur*, beginning with the lines:

““O Cæsar, we who are about to die  
Salute you’ was the gladiator’s cry  
In the arena standing face to face  
With death and with the Roman populace.”

And again, after greeting his audience,

“ . . . the teachers who in earlier days  
Led our bewildered feet through learning's maze  
They answer us—Alas, what have I said?  
What greetings come there from the voiceless dead?  
They are no longer here. They are all gone  
Into the land of Shadows,—all save one.  
Honor and reverence and the good repute  
That follows faithful service as its fruit  
Be unto him, whom living we salute.”

*Are we down-hearted ?*

“ . . . nothing is too late  
Till the tired heart has ceased to palpitate.  
Cato learned Greek at eighty; Sophocles  
Wrote his grand *Œdipus*, and Simonides  
Bore off the prize of verse from his compeers  
When each had numbered more than fourscore years.”

So in cheerful courage we shall “carry on” until the last stroke of the closing hour. We greet our Alma Mater with joy for every indication of prosperity and wholesome growth. Commencing its work in the first decade after the removal of the Chickasaw Indians from this region, it had the experience of crude beginnings common to all the colleges founded in the early settlement of the newer states, but it had the backing of men of vision, and the support, though financially too meager, of a public that was sure it knew a university when it saw one and that it was a paying investment for any community. This was the initiative period when college-founding was one of the chief public interests in every new State; when in one western State, scarcely yet organized, it was a boast that they already had “six colleges completely built and the logs cut for another.”

I have recently read a history of the beginnings of the State University in a certain western state, where every

citizen wanted to have a hand in the management of the "Peoples' University." Each parent wanted his son to have a special course laid out according to the boy's capacity, and for the boy to be graduated without fail and quickly, whether the work had been done or not. Where all citizens in the community wanted to know why the faculty did not make the boys behave in a quiet way, and when any punishment was visited on an offender the community outside the University was ready and active in using every legal or other device to secure immunity for the offender.

How natural all this seems to those who have had experience in trying to make a college succeed. Fortunate is that administrator who can steer between the Scylla and Charybdis which beset his way. When, in addition, selfish political plans or ambitions beset the institution, the only course left to the administrator, apparently, is to do as the captain of the ship did in St. Paul's shipwreck,—“Loose the rudder bands, hoist up the main sail to the wind, and make toward the shore” and shallow water, for shipwreck is inevitable. No honorable or great achievement under such conditions is possible. As in this case cited there may be no loss of any man's life, specially if he is able to swim or to secure a piece of floating wreckage, but disastrous loss of the ship and failure of its high mission.

In the course of time doubtless some of you, my brethren of the Alumni, will be called to membership in the Board which directs the affairs of the University and which the undergraduate student is apt to consider the highest on earth, and the wisest. The Board has not always considered itself to be so, for I have known it quietly to take counsel and seek knowledge of student bodies or graduating classes—probably with the idea that these latter are in a case analogous to that of the “ultimate consumer” and therefore able to know what is the matter. Well do I recall that one class just graduating, in consultation over the affairs of the



University, unanimously came to the conclusion that the Christmas holidays should be abolished as being unnecessary and a waste of time and money. This recommendation was adopted by the Board in June and worked quietly until Christmas came around, with the usual flood of requests to the Chancellor from parents and students for permission to be allowed to go home, each a little earlier than the expected time. The Chancellor replied that he could give permits to go home on parents' requests, but that under the rule adopted by the Board he would not be able to readmit such students after Christmas. This was the law. But immediately after Christmas came a flood of letters from parents, influential friends, and members of the Board insisting that the boys be taken back,—and they were taken back. I can have some appreciation of the feelings which that honored Chancellor carried to his grave. This occurred nearly twoscore years ago. All of us have learned many things in the school of experience within that time.

The desire to serve the University on the Board of Trustees is a worthy and laudable ambition for any alumnus, and I trust that in the future many of our brethren will be found thus serving. Like every good work it calls for thought and the exercise of good judgment such as only comes when a careful study of the problems involved is made a matter of duty and hard work. One of the great problems to be adjusted in the near future is the one relating to the proper compensation of the members of the faculty. These are men who have spent years of time and thousands of dollars in preparation for their honorable and noble work, and whose very devotion to it in a way unfits them to take up any other. Only in a few of the older universities of the country have I noted any effort to secure funds needed to give the professors what would be called a living wage in this day. The whole body of teachers in America is pitifully underpaid, and none more so than college administrators

and professors whose family expenses are, by outside circumstances which they cannot control, compelled to be higher than they can conveniently meet.

Ideal would be the work of a governing board that could place well-balanced responsibility and authority in the hands of its chief administrator and pay such salaries to professors as would relieve them from the dread of possible displacement without shelter.

With such a reign of justice most of the causes of friction in colleges would be removed and all would move smoothly toward the goal of high achievement.











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